

## PRESIDENT'S DISMISSAL OF LANSING CONDEMNED BY THE PRESS

seem at the Capitol today that factious remarks were constantly being made as to the possibility of the demand for the resignation of Cabinet officers seen talking together.

Lacking all contact with the Executive, no Cabinet officer seems to know tonight what is going to happen next. But it was made clear that for the time being at least no more Cabinet resignations are likely to follow as a result of the Lansing incident.

Under Secretary of State Polk automatically became Acting Secretary of State today, and came to remain without special designation for a period of thirty days. Notification of his temporary charge of the State Department was sent to all diplomatic officers throughout the world. Speculation regarding Mr. Lansing's successor included the names of Mr. Polk, Ambassador Davis and Secretary of War Baker. But Mr. Polk seems by long odds to have the best chance.

## Believed Polk Would Accept.

It is believed that he would accept the offer, though his health is none too vigorous. Having been in Paris, Mr. Polk was generally considered to be the best qualified. So far as is known, however, the President has given no intimation whatever of his intentions in this matter.

Washington hummed with rumors today, one of which was that Rear Admiral Grayson at one of the Cabinet meetings he attended had asked by what right the meeting was being held behind Admiral Grayson's back. He was promptly denied this story. It arose from the fact that he was summoned by the Cabinet at this meeting to give information as to the President's health.

The exact relations which the President's entourage has had up to the present here. It is known that Mr. Lansing has been in the White House since the President's return from Europe. Mr. Wilson has played an important part. It was even said that Mr. Wilson had exercised the right of passing judgment upon what matters were calculated to affect the President during part of his illness. By some it was thought possibly to explain the last paragraph in the first letter in which reference was made by the President to a recent note of Mr. Lansing to Mrs. Wilson.

Although Mr. Lansing, who left the State Department yesterday for the last time, continued to-day to keep in seclusion, information about the circumstances surrounding the President's illness was forthcoming from some of his friends. It was declared that Mr. Lansing had taken pains to consult every member of the Cabinet, and possibly the one exception of Mr. Davis, but particularly did he rely upon the advice of Secretary Baker, knowing of the close relations existing between the latter and the President and the fact that Mr. Lansing had had for Mr. Baker's judgment. Mr. Lansing took the precaution, it was stated, of getting Mr. Baker's approval in writing of this and other actions of his. Postmaster General Burleson, another who is especially mentioned as having been consulted and as having given his approval.

It was said that there was a difference between the Cabinet members and those over which Vice-President Marshall presided. The latter were held while Mr. Wilson was abroad, and Mr. Marshall presided by special designation of the President. It was the situation during the President's illness in the first week of October that caused Mr. Lansing to consult his colleagues and to call a meeting. The President's serious stroke was on September 23, and a Cabinet meeting was held October 5.

## Lane Shares Responsibility.

The only member or co-member of the Cabinet today who came out publicly to share responsibility with Mr. Lansing was Secretary Lane, who said Mr. Lansing had called him on the telephone and obtained his approval.

"We all thought the meetings were a good thing," said Mr. Lane. "They were often attended by Mr. Grayson, and messages were transmitted to the President on questions decided. The critical situation precipitated by the coal strike came up for consideration as well as matters pertaining to the first industrial conference and other important questions."

"I feel that I attended the meetings on a full level of responsibility with Secretary Lansing, inasmuch as I had agreed to the advisability of their being held. Other members of the Cabinet apparently took the same position."

Mr. Lane said the constitutional question never was discussed.

With it pretty definitely established that the President had certainly known for a long time that these meetings were being held, there was a disposition at the Capitol and elsewhere to search for hidden causes for the President's condition. A story that was circulated was that Mr. Lansing was one of those who felt convinced that the President was incapacitated for the duties of his office and that a way should be found to remove him. This, it was alleged, had been carried to President Wilson. Friends of Mr. Lansing insisted that they had never heard such a suggestion from him.

As a matter of fact these close friends of Mr. Lansing attribute his forced resignation to the Bullitt testimony more than to anything else. The President heard of this testimony while on his western trip. Mr. Lansing's friends felt then that his resignation was inevitable. But the President was taken ill on his trip and there followed the period during which the President was kept from acting or thinking upon affairs of the Government. The Bullitt testimony was believed by them to have remained firmly fixed in the Presidential mind and reflection on it as his health improved was thought to have been the chief underlying cause of the correspondence.

But why the President should have been seized upon the Cabinet meeting as a pretext not a single one of the President's friends could explain to-day, and it was this which provoked the comment at the Capitol with respect to the President's state of health.

Officials in a position to know were emphatic in saying to-day that Mr. Lansing had not performed during the President's illness a single executive act that should have rested with the President. This applied particularly to the conduct of foreign affairs, in regard to which he had been scrupulously exact, particularly in connection with the peace negotiations at Paris.

## No More Resignations.

At the White House to-day it was said that there would be no more resignations from the Cabinet as a result of the Lansing incident. Secretary Tamm declined to comment on the situation in these words: "I am not going to discuss the Wilson-Lansing controversy—the letters speaking for themselves."

A speech which Mr. Lansing made on the League of Nations in Boston before the annual meeting of the American Bar Association was among the causes mentioned as having provoked the President. Mr. Lansing, in the early days

of Paris, drew up a plan for a league of nations which was decidedly different from the one adopted, and was particularly designed to keep within all the constitutional limitations.

It is plain that absolutely no favor was shown the President. Also Mr. Lansing had believed that the President would stand by the principle of the freedom of the seas, and is known to have regarded this as one of the most important issues to be pressed. He was among those greatly surprised when, upon his return from the London conference, he found the President had dropped his one of the fourteen points.

He was again aggrieved when the President refused to stand by his position that the treaty should not demand the trial of the Kaiser. Only in the case of Shantung, however, did Mr. Lansing, so far as is known, go on record as virtually protesting at the President's decision.

LONDON, Feb. 14.—This afternoon's London newspapers print the news of Secretary Lansing's resignation under a variety of prominent captions, such as "United States Political Bombshell," "Washington Sensation" and "Great United States Sensation."

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says: "President Wilson's return to political activity has been announced by a sensational stroke." During his illness, the newspaper says, all kinds of reports were current as to where the real seat of authority lay in the conduct of the American administration. The *Gazette* adds: "The curtain now has been thrust aside and we have the lively spectacle of the President not only using his prerogative but employing it to discharge his chief legal duty." The newspaper considers the President's self-assertion "emerges all the stronger for his enforced rest, and he is evidently going to take up the reins of government again in a spirit that will not parley with opposition."

The *Westminster Gazette* says: "The dismissal of Secretary Lansing by the President is a dramatic illustration of the peculiar power assigned to the head of the Government by the American Constitution. What it is exactly that Secretary Lansing has done is not very clear, but he would appear to have applied on his own account what has been described as the American principle of one-man management, while President Wilson insists on a monopoly of the idea."

## WOULD INQUIRE INTO LANSING'S 'GUILT'

Representative Mason Introduces Humorous Resolution.

SPECIAL TO THE SUN AND NEW YORK HERALD. WASHINGTON, Feb. 14.—Representative William E. Mason (Ill.), Republican, to-day introduced a resolution in the House demanding a full investigation by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the President's charge that Robert Lansing violated the Constitution when he, as ranking Cabinet member, called department heads into informal conference during the illness of Mr. Wilson.

His resolution, which was characterized by satire, asserts that "it is rumored that one Albert S. Burleson, still Postmaster General, has recently cracked the Constitution by seeking the advice of the Department of Justice as to how he could possibly destroy unfriendly newspapers."

It has also been reported, the resolution says, "that Secretary Joseph Daniels and Secretary Newton D. Baker met clandestinely in the hallway of the building known as the State, War and Navy Building and conversed on the subject of the evidence of one Rear Admiral Sims, which involved inter-departmental matters."

Representative Mason's resolution reviews briefly regarding the case of the difference between the President and Mr. Lansing and says that it is charged that they started "over the 'tiffing question' of whether the Government should be turned over to a super-State. He declares that the people view with alarm the fact that other members of the Cabinet 'conspired with Robert Lansing to break, destroy and utterly demolish the Constitution.'"

The resolution provides that the Foreign Relations Committee of the House shall report what article of the Constitution was broken by Mr. Lansing and whether other members of the Cabinet "were equally guilty."

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## WILSON REBUKED IN NATION'S PRESS

Editorial Comment Is Overwhelmingly in Sympathy With Lansing.

BAD EFFECT ON PARTY General Opinion Is President's Treatment of Secretary Was Unjustified.

Editorial comment on President Wilson's action in forcing the resignation of Secretary Lansing follows:

The New York Times—Until President Wilson raised the point there has never been any question of the legality or constitutionality of these procedures (Cabinet meetings). . . . Of all men in the United States President Wilson should have been most wary of raising this question. . . . It was known early in October that he could not attend Cabinet meetings. If Congress had then accepted the theory which Mr. Wilson now propounds, that the Cabinet could do nothing without his presence, the consequence that Government business was at a standstill, Congress might have felt it to be its duty to ascertain whether, in respect to the President, the condition described by Article II, Section 5 of the Constitution as "inability to discharge the powers and duties of said office" actually existed. Had constitutional inability been ascertained and declared, the powers and duties of the President's office would at once have been devolved on the Vice-President. That eventually, we are very sure, would have been much more distasteful to President Wilson than the resignation of Secretary Lansing's temporary and, as it seems to us, and to the people of the country, absolutely necessary assumption of the power to bring the Cabinet members together in informal conferences. . . . Mr. Lansing's conscientious effort to provide for the continuance of public business during the President's illness was not a sufficient reason for rebuking him and asking his retirement.

The Tribune—The whole country must have read the letters with a heavy heart and a sense of uncertainty as to the future. . . . The department heads have not only the right but the duty to confer with one another, to avoid acting at cross purposes. During the long illness of President Garfield Cabinet conferences were regularly held. The ship of State cannot be allowed to drift. Someone must steer and others must keep the propellers moving. This is not debatable. It applies with equal force to the past, the present and the future.

The World—The sensational element in regard to the Lansing resignation lies in the President's accusations of usurpation during his illness. That is a grave charge for a President of the United States to make against his Secretary of State, and it cannot be left to the realm of speculation and conjecture. It is a charge that the President is under moral obligation to prove by citations of cases. The offense that is alleged is one that is impeachable by the President has no right to let it rest on his own general assertion. It is inconceivable that Mr. Wilson is angered by the mere fact that Cabinet meetings were held or that Mr. Lansing presided. These meetings have been going on for months, and the fact was known to the President. He could have stopped them by a word. . . . Secretary Lansing could not have usurped the powers of the President without having done something definite. . . . It is that "something definite" which is veiled and masked in the correspondence. . . . No President is obliged to give reasons for resigning the resignation of a Cabinet officer, but if reasons are given at all, they should be complete. They should be reasons that satisfy the mind and conscience of the country. This is plainly a case for what Mr. Wilson himself used to call "business publicity." On the basis of . . . President

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FALSE STATEMENTS CONCERNING Advance in Bread Prices

Last Friday a false and harmful story was passed out to local newspapers supposed to emanate from the office of Arthur Williams, Food Administrator, and which reported an advance in bread prices by the Ward Baking Company.

This story is a great injustice to the Ward people and no wider misstatement of fact has ever been published in a New York newspaper.

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO TRUTH IN THE STORY

No advance has been made or will be made as long as it will be possible to avoid it. No announcement has been made concerning any future advance in price.

Some one, either through ignorance or with malicious intent, has done our company a great wrong. The story published in some of Friday's papers is ridiculous and unworthy the attention of any intelligent person who can easily understand that there could be no justification whatever for doubling the price of bread to the extent named.

Ward's Bread is now sold at the same price as fixed by the local Food Administrator many months ago, and we hope the public will accept this statement of facts made by a reputable business concern which has sense enough to know that were they to make such an unjustifiable price advance it would be equal to committing business suicide.

We hope and expect, that in fairness to us, the office of the New York Food Administrator will take such steps as will accord our company through newspaper publicity a full measure of justice and a correction of this most unfair statement.

WARD BAKING COMPANY

den's statement alone, the drastic action he has taken is not justified by the facts that he presents.

The Evening Sun—The correspondence between the President and Mr. Lansing is pregnant with material for thought and none of it pleasant. There is hardly a line that does not create distrust if not apprehension concerning the existing processes of government at Washington. First of all, we believe, comes the astonishing disclosure of the President's total lack of knowledge of the manner in which the executive functions, centering in him under the Constitution, have been carried on. The President never relinquished the powers and faculties of his office because acting invalidly. He retained full power over the destinies of the country. Yet, it would appear, the members of his family, domestic, official and medical, must have kept him in complete darkness as to the times that were being planned or executed in his name. In view of the assurances that were constantly given as to his condition the new view, which his own letter affords, must cause indignation, not unmingled with other and sterner emotions.

The Evening Mail—From every point of view it would have been far better for the country and for President Wilson that the President had been kept in the dark as to the separation had come, officially at least, on some other grounds. The forcing out of Secretary Lansing is notice that the President has resumed his former position as chief executive of the executive departments of government. He desires no opinion but his own; no initiative but his own. There can be no differences. That is characteristic of Mr. Wilson's conduct from 1912 until his illness, and particularly true of his course and attitude throughout the peace conference at Paris. Whether the results are acceptable to the people of America or not has been indicated in all the elections since and including 1916, and will be told once more at the national ballot box next November.

The Globe—The President's action in forcing the resignation of Mr. Lansing can only be described as a political error. If his judgment in this case be a specimen of the "fully restored mental vigor" of which Dr. Young has lately assured us, the country is indeed in sore straits. . . . Of his right to remove from office and of the reasons assigned by the President for his removal, we are in the dark. But on his legal point the President is wrong, for there is no constitutional inhibition on informal meetings of Cabinet members. This is merely another manifestation of his whole theory of autocratic, personal government. No Old World ruler of the old regime was ever more arbitrary or less given to taking advice. . . . He has regarded his Cabinet as a group of clerks. Such autocracy was never before enthroned in the Executive chair in Washington. It is the patriotic duty of Congress—at this time of the President's disability—to refuse to permit further encroachments by a self-willed President on American institutions.

Kansas City Star (Independent)—The forced resignation of Secretary Lansing calls for suspended judgment. The charge of usurpation of Presidential authority is a grave one, and we cannot believe the President would make such an allegation unless he felt sure of his ground. However, there is the possibility that those who have surrounded the President throughout his protracted illness have, through a limited grasp upon affairs, prevented him from forming judgments with all the facts before him.

St. Louis Globe Democrat (Independent Republican)—We cannot believe

that President Wilson has advanced himself in the good opinion of the nation by his words and action in connection with the resignation of Secretary of State Lansing. The asperity of his tone and the harshness of his judgment have insufficient justification in the circumstances as they are set forth in the published correspondence. It is evident from the correspondence as it has been evident from previous disclosures that Mr. Wilson has never relied upon the members of his Cabinet that did not coincide with his own, and has taken advice only when it supported conclusions that he had already reached. The President makes no claim that the Government has suffered by their action. His condemnation rests wholly on the assumption that his personal authority has been usurped. The letter to Lansing is indeed an attack upon his whole Cabinet, and the country, we believe, will in this matter approve the Cabinet and condemn the critic. As to "customs and precedent," no President in our history has been so little bound or influenced by them as Mr. Wilson.

St. Paul Dispatch (Independent)—Americans will find in the egotistical indictment by the President more to laugh at than to ponder. The President in the present. They are familiar with Mr. Wilson's determination to be the whole government, nothing for anybody else to do but sign on the dotted line. In this knowledge the verdict will displease Secretary Lansing for his servile wormlike exit and convict the President of another and his worst display of self-centered autocracy.

St. Louis Times (Republican)—Congress should take steps to fill the Presidency until Mr. Wilson becomes normal. People with no authority whatever, under the Constitution or the law, have been virtually acting for him. We have been fed with lies as to his physical condition. It has been revealed within the last week that Mr. Wilson did have a clot on the brain and one side was paralyzed, as Senator Moses of New Hampshire declared immediately after the President was sent to his bed. The letter to Lansing shows that the President is not in fit condition, that he is a whimsical despot, with little regard for common sense and common decency. Congress should act and let the Supreme Court of the United States decide

whether the constitutional provision for an acting President is meaningless.

St. Louis Star (Democratic)—If President Wilson actually based his suggestion that Mr. Lansing resign solely upon this "assumption of authority," more must be known than is disclosed in the letters to determine the merit of the dispute. The mere calling of informal meetings for purposes of discussion would hardly affront the President. Mr. Lansing's explanation of his act is frank. He says he did what he considered his duty. It is more than apparent that a convenient time has nearly been chosen to end unpleasant explanations. It is scarcely possible to express an opinion of merit. The incident probably will be made a great deal more of than it actually amounts to.

Boston Globe—Some will see in the extraordinary frankness of the correspondence between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Lansing the querulousness of a sick man. To others it will be a sign of cowardice that the President is so gaining in strength as to wish to move the furniture about. But whatever the reason for the plain speaking in these letters, they reveal a real conflict of political opinion. In such a conflict the President on one side, his subordinate on the other, it is to the public interest that one should go. The one to go is not the President.

Boston Record—This course of the President cannot be commended or excused. The affairs of the nation are drifting amid perilous circumstances. The Lansing incident emphasizes a dangerous state of affairs.

Pittsburgh Sun (Democratic)—The retirement of the Secretary of State marks the return of Mr. Wilson to forceful direction of executive duties of government. That much is revealed by the correspondence, in which the President shows all his grasp and confident mastery. Less revealing is a source of gratification not only to his friends and adherents, but all citizens will hail the prospect of a revitalized Administration. Mr. Lansing's excuse that he remained in office through loyalty, and through a wish not to embarrass him, must be accepted. Mr. Wilson is entirely within his rights in insisting upon the fullest

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